

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND SEALS LIVE- CAPTURE AND RADIO TAGGING PROJECT

2001



Swimmer prepares to set the net.

The principal goal of the tagging project is to obtain a correction factor for the fraction of seals not hauled out (e.g., in the water) during the mid-May to early June aerial abundance surveys. Biological samples (e.g., blood, skin, hair, morphometrics) for health assessment and stock identification work are secondary goals. Phase I of the project began on 12 March with a field staff meeting at the NMFS Aquarium where capture, biological sampling, and tagging protocols



Team ferries sampling equipment to the capture sight.



Netted seals are brought ashore.

were reviewed. Capture operations were conducted from 14-20 March, principally in Chatham Harbor on Cape Cod. Twenty-one harbor seals were captured and VHF radio tags were applied to 13 seals. Phase II of the project was conducted off Rockland, Maine from 12-20 April, where 18 harbor seals were captured and 17 tagged. The work is part of a collaborative seal research project between NEFSC's Protected Species Branch (PSB) and the University of

Maine (UM) conducted under research permits issued by NMFS, Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge and the University of Maine Animal Care Committee. Participants were: Richard Merrick, John Nicolas, Richard Pace, Dave



Measuring size and monitoring heart rate.

Potter, Gordon Waring and Fred Wenzel (PSB); Jim Gilbert and Steve Renner (UM); Jon Lewis (Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), and Marcy Lucus (UM & DMR); Tami Mau



Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*) ready for release.

(University of Alaska); Rob DiGiovanni (Riverhead Foundation); Stephanie Wood (University of Massachusetts); Lisa Sette (National Park Service); Chris Taylor (Marine Environmental Research Institute); Pieter deHart (Boston University Marine Program), Belinda Rubinstein (New England Aquarium) and Amy Ferland (Norwalk Aquarium).

[All photos courtesy of S. Renner and J. Gilbert, Univ. of Maine]